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Bay Shore Park Sparked by the Trolley System

John McGrain



Bay Shore Park Postcard. The inscription on its reverse states, "Maryland's most beautiful, largest, safest beach on Chesapeake Bay. Clean salt water bathing. We specialize in picnics, crab feasts and outings. 50 or 5,000 persons. Special rates. Rides for kiddies and grownups." (Courtesy of John McGrain.)



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Baltimore City's first experimental electric street car system began regular service in August, 1885, operating between the city and Baltimore County's village of Hampden, sometimes by third-rail power and sometimes by small battery-powered cars. The car line was a national "first," as far as fare-paying electric service goes. By 1890, Baltimore had heavier and more reliable vehicles on its streets, the true trolley car being one of them, acquiring its power from overhead wires and traveling as fast as traffic moves today, sometimes faster. By 1893, Towson had trolley car service, and in 1899, various competing transit companies were merged into a well-capitalized system named the United Railways and Electric Company.

As a result of these developments, both city and suburban residents suddenly had a wide selection of destinations to choose from. People of moderate means no longer needed to bemoan their lack of a horse and buggy. Instead, seemingly endless destinations beckoned, provided they were within reach of transit stops or pastures suitable for subdivision and rail expansion.

Transit managers resolved to create new destinations of their own, enterprises that would attract fare-paying riders and generate additional revenue for the company. However, this idea was not a new one; steam railroads were in the business of operating parks and picnic groves for quite some time. The Western Maryland Railroad debuted its Greenwood Park Hotel near present-day Mount Wilson as early as 1875, and their elaborate Pen-Mar Park in Washington County near present-day Fort Ritchie was operating in 1877. Even in the days of the horse-car transit system there was the Catonsville Railway Park, a grove that appeared west of Nunnery Lane and north of Frederick road in the 1876 Baltimore City Atlas by G.M. Hopkins.

The electric transit system served Electric Park (at Belvedere Avenue and Reisterstown Road), and established River View (now Point Breeze), and Gwynn Oak Park. All these locations were designed for family oriented amusements, with rides, picnic grounds, bandstands, and food vendors. And, in addition, trolley cars also provided transit to beer gardens, such as Jack Flood's Park at Curtis Bay and Darley Park (now Harford Road and 20th Street).

While many recent immigrants believed a little

alcohol was a healthy part of daily living, many reform-minded Progressive Era Americans thought the exact opposite, and while some took trains to beer gardens, others rode to temperance camps in Glyndon and Emory Grove.

Influenced by temperance ideology, transit managers resolved to build an alcohol-free park the public could not resist. Their ideas manifest in plans for creating Bay Shore Park, where they intended to provide the added incentive of salt-water bathing - a pleasure that formerly required the use of excursion boats heading east from Baltimore to Tolchester, or south to North Beach.

By the early twentieth-century, transit systems were robust, and their bonds found ready investors. United Railways was particularly well-situated, flush with capital, and dominating the regional market. Bolstering United Railways' position, Baltimore's population was continually expanding, providing a steady source of new fare-paying customers.

In February 1905, the North Point Land Company sold 30 acres on Shallow Creek to the Baltimore, Sparrows Point & Chesapeake Railway Company, land formerly owned (until two days prior) by Franklin Roberts - the land shown in the 1898 Bromley atlas as the property of Mrs. Joseph Roberts.¹ By 1906, the property was in the hands of United Railways by lease. Not far away was the historic Todd House, and at the tip of North Point the developing fortifications of Fort Howard, a modern, concrete bastion designed to deter any foreign fleet daring to penetrate the Chesapeake Bay.

The careful planning that gave birth to Bay Shore Park is best summed up by an extensive report in the *Sun* of August 5, 1906:

**BAY SHORE TO OPEN
CARS WILL RUN TO NEW RESORT ON
NORTH POINT WEDNESDAY
TRACK FOLLOWS WATER FRONT
Park Covers 80 Acres -- Fine Buildings
Completed -- Good Bathing Promised**

The Baltimore, Sparrows Point and Chesapeake Railway Company hoped to have the work of construction on its Bay Shore extension from Sparrows Point sufficiently advanced to admit opening the line to Fort Howard and Bay Shore Park by noon yesterday, but was prevented by the heavy rains of the past few days. Unless something occurs to prevent this, the opening will take place on

Wednesday.

The line is constructed as a double track eastwardly from Sparrows Point for 2.18 miles, the balance of the line being in the form of a loop, the distance around which is 1.56 miles. This loop enables the line to take in Fort Howard and Bay Shore Park and to parallel the shore for over a mile. Jones, North Point, and Shallow Creeks are all crossed by substantial bridges between Sparrows Point and the park, only the first two are crossed in returning from the park, as the north side of the line will pass considerably above the head of Shallow Creek. On account of the departure from a direct line to take in Fort Howard the trip going will be .63 of a mile longer than the return trip.

The track next to the bay has been constructed at an elevation of seven feet above low water and is protected by a seawall 5,000 feet in length. Connecting with the seawall is a pier, not completed, extending 1, 000 feet into the bay.

Music Pavilion Seats 2,000

The buildings already completed consist, besides the carousel building, railway station and restaurant, of a music pavilion, with orchestra shell and seating capacity for 2,000 persons, a bath house of modern design, containing 185 rooms: a dancing pavilion, surmounting a billiard hall, upon the ground floor, in the rear of which is a bowling building with 10 alleys. The restaurant building is commodious and imposing.

The railway station is 208 feet in length and of pleasing design, while the carousel building is one of the finest in the country. There is in the park a pump house, equipped with filters and fire pumps. This building stands over an artesian well 340 feet in depth. Slightly in the rear, between the restaurant building and music pavilion which are connected, stand the administration and machinery buildings.

When completed the pier will have upon its outer and circular end a two-story pavilion, while between it and the shore will be a number of ornamental shelters in which persons may sit in the shade and watch the bathers.

Changing Gauge of Tracks

To facilitate delivery of railway and other building material one track on each double section and the entire loop were at first laid to steam-railroad gauge and operated by a locomotive. This admitted the freight cars arriving with material coming straight through to destination without breaking bulk at Sparrows Point.

The tracks are now being widened eight inches to adapt them to the United Railway's gauge, so that when certain improvements are made in the Highlandtown section prior to the opening of the next season cars may be run through to the shore from any

of the city lines. A small loop, 2,966 feet in length, has been constructed inside of the large loop, to surround the buildings upon the quadrangle and connects with the main loop north and south of the railway station. Its first use was to expedite construction by convenient delivery of the material to the buildings, with the ultimate object of facilitating the handling of equipment. As they arrive and discharge passengers on busy days, they will, if not immediately loaded for the return trip, take the inner loop to the north end of the station, pass around and take a position near the south end of the station and await orders. Provision has been made for constructing a storage yard upon this loop should it in the future become necessary. This will enable the company to fit the service to the demand and avoid unnecessary car mileage, such travel as a rule being heavy in opposite directions at different hours.

Water From Artesian Wells

The artesian drinking water is pure, except that it is strongly impregnated with iron, which affects both taste and color. Acting on the steel company's experience at Sparrows Point and the government experience at Fort Howard, the Bay Shore Park Company has provided an up-to-date filter plant, while the ornamental fountain in the center of the quadrangle serves an additional or main purpose of spraying the water to relieve it of the iron flavor.

The park reservation consists of 30 acres of land, with one-fourth of a mile front on the bay, about half of which has been improved, while the remainder is held for hotel or other uses. The land is a portion of a 550-acre tract formerly owned by Franklin Roberts, but now controlled by the North Point Land Company, of which Mr. Roberts is president. The railway extension from Sparrows Point and the establishment of Bay Shore Park are intended to meet a long-felt want of an urban and suburban population approximating three-quarters of a million people.

While the water will not be so salty at the park, owing to the strong flow of the Susquehanna, yet it will be so strong enough to satisfy the designation of "salt water bathing, for which elaborate and up-to-date facilities have been provided. The beach is hard and smooth, and the water deepens so gradually that a non-swimming adult may venture out 1,000 feet with perfect safety.

Alcoholic Liquors Barred

The sale of intoxicating liquors will not be allowed. In addition to the city car fare to Highlandtown, there will be a charge of 10 cents in each direction, with free admission to the grounds and to the pier when completed.

It is believed that the building of the Bay Shore extension should be of considerable interest to the Government, which has recently increased the garrison at Fort Howard, the convenience of which must be greatly sub-served by the road, which will have a station within 100 yards of the fort gate. As originally planned, the road was to have been constructed partly upon Government property, but in view of the necessity for concealing some important features of the plan of defense, the Secretary of War decided that the public should not be given promiscuous admission to the reservation by the railway. The company persisted, but the Secretary was obdurate. The following extract from a letter from President Hood to Colonel Thorp, the commandant, recites some of the advantages that might have resulted to the garrison from such an arrangement.

Assuming that the large expenditures which have been made by the Government at Fort Howard are not for ornamental purposes, but for effective defensive ones, I think as an engineer and an old soldier, that the effectiveness of the garrison in preventing landing by an enemy to pass the fort by or to take it in the rear would be materially enhanced by having the railway road bed across Shallow Creek and extending northwardly one and one-half miles to Black Marsh, for use in handling troops upon the most direct line, as they would thus be relieved of the necessity of not only passing around the head of Denton Creek, but of Shallow Creek as well---that is, they would place both of these obstructions behind them by using this 1,200 foot crossing.

I would add that it would be entirely satisfactory for the Government to reserve in any such grant of right of way full power to suspend railway services upon such right of way during any defensive operations with which it would interfere. Of course, this would not only go without saying, but the railway company would stand ready at any time to place the transportation facilities of its system at the service of the government for the quick handling of troops in any number, it is often being called upon to handle 50,000 passengers to and from a single resort in a few hours while it has a record of having handled something over 700,000 persons in 20 hours.

The park waterfront and particularly the pier will furnish an unobstructed view of Fort Howard, one of the main defenses of Baltimore, and of shipping entering or leaving the port.

The Men Who Did The Work

Those prominently connected with this railway and park development, in addition to the executive staff of the companies, which latter is the same as that: of the United Railways, were:

D.B. Banks, chief engineer, who gave special attention to design of pier and seawall and providing

water supply.

J. M. Hood, Jr., principal assistant engineer, who made the final location of line and has had general supervision of construction.

D.J. Hahn, resident engineer, who has had charge of operations upon the ground.

F.O. Keilholtz, consulting engineer.

T.A. Cross, superintendent of overhead lines, in charge of electrical work.

Messrs. Simonson & Pietsch, architects of all buildings.

The Constructing Engineers' Company and D. E. Evans were the contractors for railway and electric construction; Sanford A. Brooks and Andrew Miller, for pile and other timberwork; Filbert Paving and Construction Company, for concrete work, and H.B. Rippel and Charles L. Stockhausen, for the resort buildings.

The resort has been leased and will be managed by Mr. M.J. Fitzsimmons, manager at Riverview.

The sharper curves have been so constructed by use of parabolic segments that when in perfect tune no appreciable shock will be felt in the transition of cars from straight lines at the higher attainable speed. The whole character of construction is in keeping with the best steam railroad practice. Owing to the three creeks intervening between Sparrows Point and the bay, and necessitating the use of circuitous routes of access, the supervision and execution of the work was difficult. Besides, it added materially to the cost, which will total, in round figures, half a million dollars \$300,000 for the railway and \$200,000 for the resort. The park company is a separate corporation from the railway company.

The operations throughout were materially facilitated by the earnest cooperation of Messrs. F. W. and R. K. Wood respectively, president and general agent of the Maryland Steel Company. That company, in addition, performed the actual work of construction upon the portion of the line between Sparrows Point and Jones Creek.²

The *Sun's* article included a large aerial rendering of the park and pier, as well as a map titled "From City Streets to Salt Water, Route to Bay Shore Park."

The *Sun*, however, was not the only publication to report in such detail about the park. The *Baltimore American* published a more sprightly article on the day of the park's official opening, August 11, 1906, describing a sneak-preview given to selected guests:

**BAY SHORE PARK WILL OPEN TODAY
NEW RESORT ON CHESAPEAKE READY
FOR PUBLIC. OFFICIALS OF UNITED
RAILWAYS AND ELECTRIC COMPANY AND
NUMBER OF INVITED GUESTS MAKE**

**FORMAL INSPECTION OF PLACE -
ARRANGEMENTS MADE TO HAVE ROYAL
ARTILLERY BAND GIVE FIRST CONCERT.
CARS TO RUN FROM CITY EVERY TEN
MINUTES**

Bay Shore Park, the magnificent new resort of the United Railways and Electric Company, will open today, with the Royal Artillery Band, Gulseppe Alala, conductor, in attendance.

Yesterday afternoon there was an informal inspection of the place by a small party. Guests of the United, and every member were enthusiastic over the unexpected beauties of the resort. At 5 o'clock the car Lord Baltimore departed, with the guests aboard, from the corner of Baltimore and Holiday streets. There were General Manager House, to chaperon the crowd; Assistant Manager Jim Pratt, Otto O. Simonson, with his fund of unexcelled yarns; Choirmaster John Tingley, William Early, with a smile of satisfaction that didn't come off the entire trip; genial David Evans, who has worked like a Trojan for the success of the resort; John M. Hood, Jr., son of the president, and a dozen or so others, all forming a merry party. At Sparrows Point a stop was made to take on Mr. R.K. Wood, general agent of the Maryland Steel Company, who has taken great interest in the success of the project.

It is doubtful if there is any trolley ride about Baltimore as attractive as that from Sparrows Point to the Bay Shore, through fertile farm lands that skirt the track; the fields rich with ungarnered fruit or waving with unharvested grain. Farmhouses, the doors of which are filled with women and children, to whom the clang of the trolley bell is as yet a novelty, are rapidly passed. Through half-cleared woodland and along country roads speeds the car, and then the Bay breaks into view.

"Magnificent, magnificent!" said the guests of yesterday, who had expected nothing to equal the scene that was before them.

Scene at the Resort

Once at the resort, however, the scene was none-the-less surprising. There before them was a symphony in white - every building silent and imposing as though patiently awaiting the crowd that will come this afternoon. There was the carousel building, the railway station, the restaurant, the music pavilion, the bathhouse, dancing pavilion with bowling alley and billiard parlors, the pumping station, fountain, 1000 foot pier and everything needed to equip a first-class resort such as the Bay Shore is intended to be.

The guests yesterday amused themselves with bowling, pool, etc., or inspected the various structures from the towers of the restaurant building and the

kitchen which is awaiting the coming of the chef and corps of waiters who will be there under the supervision of Mr. M.J. Fitzsimmons, lessee of the grounds. The electrical display in the evening was superb.

The return trip was made by way of Riverview. It was here that the masterstroke was made. After listening to the music, given by the Royal Artillery Band, the guests decided that so pretentious a place as the Bay Shore could be fittingly opened only by the Royal Artillery Band.

Messrs. Simonson and Evans labored long and loyally with Manager Fitzsimmons, who at first was loath to permit the band to leave Riverview. Finally, to the great delight of all, he consented, and so the Royal Artillery Band will be present at the opening of Bay Shore this afternoon and evening. Another band will be at River View.

A 10-minute car schedule is to be observed by the company. The first car this morning will leave Howard and Franklin streets at 7 o'clock, and cars thereafter will run every 10 minutes. On Sundays cars will leave at about 5 o'clock. The last car will leave Bay Shore at 11:20 p. m. As no toxicating liquors are to be sold at the resort, exceptionally select classes of people are expected to patronize it.

Yesterday's Visitors

Those in the party yesterday were:

Messrs. Otto G. Simonson and T.W. Pietsch, architects; David E. Evans, contractor; M.J. Fitzsimmons, lessee; R.K. Wood, general agent Maryland Steel Co.; Wm. A. House, James R. Pratt, Wm. Early, John Tingle, J.M. Hood, Jr., T.A. Cross, H.H. Adams, W.H. Staub, J. W. Gunts, Carroll Thomas, J.K. Morris, J.E. Harrall, D.J. Hauer, O.C. Journey, Major J.S. Pangborn, D.F. Daley, J.G. Nelson, A.E. Hungerford, E.S. Greene and J.S. Gaeller.

A luncheon was served aboard the car.³



Bay Shore Park Postcard. Inscription reads, "Band Pavilion, Bay Shore Park, Near Baltimore, MD." (Courtesy of John McGrain.)

As promised, the park opened on time and the Royal Artillery Band was weaned away from River View to perform at Bay Shore. The conductor, G. Aiala, a 34-year-old native of Lecce, Italy, managed to develop a march titled "Bay Shore Park" on brief notice. Another march was titled "United Railways and Electric Company." Both compositions would surely make interesting pieces if published, but they probably only existed in manuscript. Half of the opening day report in the *Baltimore American* was devoted to the band's selections:

**BAY SHORE PARK FORMALLY OPENED
SOME OF THE BEST PEOPLE IN
ATTENDANCE - ROYAL ARTILLERY BAND
GIVES SELECT PROGRAM**

Bay Shore Park, the new resort of the United Railways and Electric Company was formally opened yesterday afternoon. The Royal Artillery Band rendered a special program to the great delight of a large crowd. Both in the afternoon and evening the accommodations of the place were put to the test, and every visitor was loud in his or her praises of its matchless beauties.

A feature of the attendance was the class of people present. Apparently the best people of Baltimore were there. There was a goodly sprinkling of unattended women and children, which bespoke the feeling of confidence universally felt as to the tone of the resort. No toxicating liquors were sold, and none will be sold. In consequence of this it is expected that the resort will be patronized to a large extent by religious denominations....⁴



Bay Shore Park Postcard, postmarked December 1915. Inscription states, "Bird's Eye View of Bay Shore Park, Near Baltimore, MD." (Courtesy of John McGrain.)

A *Sun* reporter was taken aback by the beauty of it all:

**BAY SHORE PARK OPEN
INSPECTION PARTY OF OFFICERS AND
GUESTS**

...The buildings are all finished in white, which presents a pleasing picture, with a background of shady oaks and elms, and with the green sward surrounding them.

It is at night however, when the resort shows. Surrounding all the buildings and all the archways leading to them are thousands of electric lights. When these are lighted up the display is magnificent and effects an illumination not heretofore attempted on such a scale in or around Baltimore. It is a scene of beauty, and Major (J.G.) Pangborn, who was a guest of the inspection party, said the conception was marvelous. He had never seen it surpassed in any similar undertaking in all his travels, and it has seldom been equaled, he said.⁵

Sunday, August 12, drew large crowds to the resort and, in spite of having a march named in its honor, the United Railways and Electric Company experienced an embarrassing power failure that stopped the trolley cars in their tracks.

Power for the suburban lines was supplied by the Pratt Street Powerhouse (built in 1893) on Pier Four, the same white elephant that was later turned into the Six Flags theme park and P.T. Flag's disco, and later turned into the ESPN Zone which operated until 2010. The backup power source at Westport also failed, and things quickly became complicated for the customers, trolley lines, and Bay Shore Park:

CITY CAR LINES STILL CRIPPLED

**EXPERTS ENGAGED TO PROBE POWER-
HOUSE TROUBLE. ONLY BY USE OF
BORROWED ENERGY IS THE UNITED
COMPANY ABLE TO RUN TROLLEYS ON
SCHEDULE TIME. FURTHER DETAILS OF
THE SERIOUS TIE-UP OF SATURDAY --
MAYOR TIMANUS WAS ONE OF THE
UNFORTUNATE PASSENGERS STALLED AT
BAY SHORE PARK.**

The United Railways and Electric Company has not yet altogether recovered from the breakdown in its Pratt Street power-house, which on Saturday afternoon and night affected all of its city lines and resulted in a complete tie-up of its eastern suburban trolleys from

10:30 p.m. until 1 o'clock yesterday morning. Cars in this and all other sections of the city and suburbs were running on schedule time yesterday, and carrying throngs of people to the various resorts, but the company was borrowing power from the Westport station of the Consolidated Gas, Electric Light and Power Company in order to make up for its own shortage. An extra force of machinists was put at work a good part of yesterday at the Pratt Street powerhouse, and about 8 o'clock in the afternoon had succeeded in greatly improving conditions. Crossed wires and defects in oiling machinery are said to have been the primary cause of the trouble.

There were two delays of the trolley lines Saturday because of the shortage of power, one from 4 to 5 p.m. and delay is said to have been the most serious with which this city has had to contend in the local history of street railways. All travel on the eastern suburban lines was at a standstill, and hundreds of people who had gone for pleasure rides to the new Bay Shore Park, River View and the numerous smaller resorts east of the city, were either compelled to spend the night away from home or did not finally reach their domiciles until the small hours before daybreak.

Arrival of Last Cars

The last cars on the Roland Park and Highlandtown lines, coming from River View, did not reach the city until nearly 2 a.m. and it was not until shortly after that hour that the last North Point trolleys from the Bay Shore Park brought their loads of weary passengers back to town. Many of the latter living far away from the center of the city were compelled to walk a mile or more before reaching their homes. Some who live in Walbrook and other northwestern suburbs made no attempt to get home, but lodged for the remainder of the night at downtown hotels. The last cars on the Back and Middle River line also got into the city about 2 a.m. and their passengers had similar experiences.

At some of the "down the river" resorts it is said that parties were organized to make the return trip to Baltimore by launches, but that the proprietors, in an attempt to reap a harvest, ran up the prices for boats to such an extent that the idea was abandoned, and the stalled passengers took chances of getting home in the cars.

Usually the crowds at the various resorts are pretty well on their way to Baltimore by 11:30 o'clock, but on Saturday night not even a start had been made by that time. Midnight rolled around, and as there were no cars running, friends and relatives began to show their anxiety. Telephone bells began to ring, and all of the car barns, as well as police stations were kept busy answering inquiries about the tie-up.

To make matters worse, many of the passengers who had been sitting constantly in the cars for many

hours, were caught in the rainstorm, which came up rather suddenly shortly before 2 o'clock. Because of the strong wind little protection was afforded by the curtains of the cars, and not a few were compelled to make the return trip home with their clothes drenched.

Mayor Timanus Held Up

The new Bay Shore Park had the honor of having Mayor Timanus as one of its stalled passengers. The Mayor made the trip with several friends, and after waiting for three hours, telephoned to the city for his automobile. His chauffeur immediately started for Bay Shore Park and made the trip in a little more than an hour. It was then about 1:30 o'clock, and when the Mayor and his friends were safely seated in the machine the chauffeur headed it for Baltimore. All went well until Highlandtown was reached, when one of the tires became punctured. Here more than a half hour was lost in an endeavor to mend the tire. Finally the job was completed but the remainder of the trip to the city was made at a slower speed, the result being that it was about 4 o'clock yesterday morning when the Mayor's auto pulled up at his home on Roland Avenue, Roland Park.

General Manager William A. House, of the Railways Company, fared worse than the Mayor. He did not arrive at his home, at Roland Park, until nearly 6 o'clock, almost in time for breakfast. Mr. House made the trip to Bay Shore Park for the purpose of seeing that things went along smoothly on opening night and was caught in the midst of the tie-up.

Mr. House spent nearly all day at his office, and was constantly on the lookout for more trouble.

"We are at a loss," he said yesterday, "to know just what caused the accident. We know that some of the machinery broke, but just what caused the tie-up, the officials of the company do not know. Yesterday the breakdown occurred first at the Westport powerhouse, which is supplying our system with power while repairs are being made to our power-house on Pratt Street."

Experts Employed

"A breakdown in our system was almost unknown in Baltimore until about four months ago. Since that time, however, we have had at least four. Just what is the real cause we are at a loss to understand. The officials propose to find out, however, and have employed experts to make a thorough investigation of our entire plant and to submit a written report pointing out what needs to be done to avoid further tie-ups. It is the idea of the service that can be had and to attain this end no expense will be spared."⁶

Two days after the fiasco, the *Baltimore American* ran a cartoon showing the hand of U.R. West, president of the utility, inscribing on a sheet of United Railways letterhead: "I promise to do better."⁷

Despite the early set-backs, Bay Shore was on its way to a long career building memories for thousands of people, especially city residents starved for space and cool breezes.

A Bay Shore postcard, postmarked June 29, 1907, reads, "See, I have kept my promise, I spent yesterday down here [at Bay Shore Park]. It certainly is a pretty place."⁸ Thousands of brief testimonials like this survive in scattered postcard collections.

Estella Spencer wrote about the days of the 1910s in an "I Remember Article" more than fifty-years after-the-fact:

One of the big thrills of a brand new summer 50 years ago was packing up with the whole family and riding out to the Bay Shore Park Hotel for a sumptuous chicken or seafood dinner.

It wasn't really a hotel, for you couldn't get overnight accommodations. Many people referred to it as the Mansion House. Actually it was an establishment which operated only dining rooms, and it was well known for its excellent food....

A sign on it advertised a seafood supper for 75 cents. I was too young in those days to pay much attention to prices. I remember the meals principally as huge affairs consisting of so much food - fried chicken and crab imperial, among other things - that you couldn't eat it all.

I remember the great expanses of tables in the dining room, all set with great white cloths, shining crystal and beautiful silver.

I was always impressed with the look of the hotel when we visited it early every summer. They painted the place every spring, and all its woodwork gleamed fresh and white. They took infinite pains with the grounds. The lawn was rich and green and perfectly trimmed. The iris and peonies were in bloom, huge and colorful, and around a fountain at the hotel there were geraniums, petunias and sweet alyssum.

... [My father] worked there as a waiter for a season or two. In later years, after he went into businesses for himself, our whole family went back to the hotel at least once a season for a fine meal and an exciting day at the Bay Shore Park amusement area.

We children got to visit the park two or three times a summer. On the last day of school our entire student body, along with parents and teachers, spent a day there. Several schools held such parties. Later, as the summer moved along, Sunday School outings would be held there.

Our family - my mother, father and ten children - lived on North Point Road in a neighborhood that didn't have any special name at the time. It is known as Edgemere now. We had a stable with two or three horses and a delivery wagon or two. My father bought up fruits and vegetables at the markets in Baltimore and sold them to housewives along a route through Sparrows Point. He also operated a small grocery store beside our house....

Bay Shore Park was, of course, a favorite with all the children. Along the midway we rode the flying' horses and a super roller coaster called the Thingamajig. There was a constant rattle of gunfire from the shooting galleries, the chatter of the men in the game booths, and two or three times a day there was a band concert. All happy noises.

Swimming was one of the bigger attractions. Bay Shore had a nice beach to begin with, and periodically hundreds of loads of white sand were brought in and spread. Bay Shore Park was a very decorous place, because it catered chiefly to family trade. Only children of 12 and under were allowed to appear in trunks.

Sometimes we ate at the big hotel. More often we selected a shaded picnic table - there were 1,000 of them - and spread our fried chicken, baked ham, potato salad, pies, cakes and lemonade under the trees....⁹

Carleton Jones writes that Bay Shore was called "the Old Point Comfort of Baltimore," a sly dig comparing the working class patrons to the First Families of Virginia who graced the venerable hotel at Old Point, near "Fortress Monroe," as the ladies of Ellen Glasgow's set continued to call it.¹⁰

Michael R. Farrell, historian of trolley cars, thought Bay Shore Park was possibly the only place in the country where a transit line passed under a roller coaster. United Railways acquired 80 semi convertible trolleys under lease from the Emergency Fleet Corporation in 1919 to haul both Sparrows Point workers and park customers. These cars came to be known as the "Red Rockets," (a name also used for red trolleys in Toronto). In the 1920s, during the off-season, the Red Rockets served as substitutes on other city lines.¹¹



Red Rocket Trolley Car, c. 1920. *Employees and supervisors of the Consolidated Gas Company board the Red Rocket trolley to Bay Shore Park for Company Day. The trolley inscription reads, "Baltimore, Sparrows Point & Bay Shore." Photograph captured by the Consolidated Gas Company. (Baltimore County Public Library Legacy Web.)*

Farrell claimed:

A strong competitor for most popular would have to be Bay Shore. The last to be established (it was always served by the United Railways, having been built after the big consolidation), Bay Shore proved to be a hit, and, except for the expansion of the Bethlehem Steel plant, might still be giving competition to Gwynn Oak. Bay Shore was opened in 1906, and much planning went into it. It was served by an extension of the Sparrows Point Line, with cars running straight, through. The ride was an exceptionally interesting one, there being long trestles over Bear, Jones, and North Point Creeks, as well as over Shallow Creek on the Fort Howard part of the loop. Passengers had the impression that the conductor was constantly collecting fares once Highlandtown was left behind, as at various times there were three and four zones. The cars were always crowded in the summer months, and on this line the multiple-unit cars were used to the end.

The park got off to an unforgettable start, when on the evening of its official opening there was a power failure on most of the United's lines in the east Baltimore area. Thousands of people were stranded all along the line until the wee hours of the morning.

United Railways was particularly proud of its station at Bay Shore. There had long been much complaining about the pushing and shoving of passengers attempting to return home from River View after a day's outing. Particular pains were taken to avoid this at Bay Shore, and they worked well.

There was a loop, with a platform fenced in so as to segregate incoming from outgoing crowds, making it possible to load the cars in an orderly manner.

Despite the inauspicious beginning due to power failure, the lure of the Chesapeake made the place immediately and immensely popular. As time went on, rides were added to the initial attractions of ballroom, bowling alley, and restaurant. The park was to become a rival of River View, only to meet the same fate, industrial expansion, shortly after World War II.¹²

The nostalgic history of Sparrows Point, titled *Reflections*, reveals an elaborate and well engineered swing system set out in the shallow water; it dangled cables for children to grasp, climb, and drop from into the water.¹³



Bay Shore Park Swing, c1921. *(Baltimore County Public Library Legacy Web.)*



Bay Shore Park Swing, c1922. *(Baltimore County Public Library Legacy Web.)*

Baltimore County's assessors measured most buildings in 1918 but failed to do so at Bay Shore Park; the list of structures and the value of each is presented here for its flavor:

United R. Ways and Elec. Co.	
1 lot of ground Bay Shore Power Plant	170
Imp. Power Plant	30,100
30 A.N. Point Rd. Bay Shore Park	1,020
Imp. Band Stand	22,500
Restaurant	29,250
Dancing Pavilion	11,250
Bath House	13,500
Administration Bldg.	2,700
Pump House	1,125
Bowling	5,625
R.R. Station	6,750
Transformer Bldg	1,112
Amusement Bldg.	1,350
Pop Corn Booth	56
Circle Swing	225
Tours, of the Sea	338
Pier, Shelter, and Sea Wall	112,231
Carrousel Bldg.	<u>5,000</u>
	254,315 ¹⁴

Carleton Jones spoke of a fire in the early 1920s, but the tax ledgers reflect no such loss or subsequent reconstruction from 1918 through 1940. However, newly added assets during that timeframe were a "water toboggan" in 1925, a bathhouse and office structure in 1926, and an "archery" worth \$200 in 1931. The abatement column of the ledger shows the power hours "razed 1937," removing \$5,000 from the company's account.¹⁵ The saddest entry in the records is the transfer of all the assets in 1935 from United Railways Company to Baltimore Transit Company (BTC).

BTC was established to reorganize the bankrupt United Railways, a victim of both the automobile era and the Great Depression. BTC had to be lean and mean to survive, and even though it held onto the same rolling stock and employees as United Railways, BTC was never cherished by the nostalgic peridromophiles. And though it provided rail buffs with true trolley cars until November 1963, it never won their hearts.

George Perry Mahoney, Baltimore County resident, and successful contractor, leased Bay Shore from the transit company in or about 1940. The only fire for which an exact date can be established took

place in May 1941, when a blaze in the "spook house" set fire to the entire midway of shooting galleries and pinball machines. Mahoney had 159 carpenters and other workmen repairing the damage before the Memorial Day holiday. The dining rooms and dance pavilions were spared. Park employees pitched in and fought the fire with such dedication that three of them had to be treated for burns.¹⁶

On June 23, 1944, BTC sold Bay Shore Park to tenant-operator Mahoney.¹⁷ Mahoney only owned and ran Bay Shore two years before reselling it on May 3, 1946, to O. L. Bonifay of Town Real Estate Corporation.¹⁸ The assets passing from Mahoney to Bonifay were listed in the deed. They included, "Equipment located in the Merry-Go-Round building, Equipment located in the Bowling Alley, Equipment located in the Restaurant... Roller Coaster Equipment including four cars motor chain and appurtenances, Whirl-O-Drom including motor cable six cars... Equipment located in the Shooting Gallery...."¹⁹

Interestingly, Bonifay did not hold onto Bay Shore long at all. In the face of an irresistible offer, Bonifay sold the land after only six months to a company called Title Holding Company. The *Evening Sun* of January 18, 1947, reported that Title Holding Company was, "one of the 'front' organizations" for the steel industry.²⁰

In the midst of the 1940s sale and resale of Bay Shore Park, shadow companies of steel industry giants Bethlehem and United States Steel were vying for new land to expand their operations. There was dickering in progress for the Todd farm and its Black Marsh, the late Harry B. Wolf's estate was snapped up, and other small parcels changed hands. Because of the secrecy surrounding the land purchases, it seems no one was exactly sure who was acquiring which parcels, and the newspapers were doing their own speculating. An *Evening Sun* article claimed, "...there were reports in the Dundalk and Sparrows Point area that the United States Steel Corporation is acquiring the land in a move to set up a tidewater steel plant rival to Bethlehem Steel's operations. Secrecy has surrounded the operations since they were tentatively launched...."²¹

A few months later, *Baltimore Magazine* reported about Bethlehem Steel's planned expansion in Baltimore in an article titled, "Story of the Month, Bethlehem Moves Towards Expansion Here."²²

Bethlehem Steel's formal announcement was made on August 19, 1947, and the first lamentations of Bay Shore's demise appeared. The writer, Frederick Krelleer, compared the park's fate to that of River View, which was itself replaced by the Western Electric telephone equipment manufacturing plant called Point Breeze. Krelleer wrote, "When Bay Shore will join River View in the limbo of water-front amusement parks has not been stated, but it will, at least be operated the rest of this season. After that, it will probably be remembered as the place where 'many a good time was had by all.' Just as River View is recalled today."²³ In his article, Krelleer added a few facts, harking back to the power failure of 1906:

Trolleys--not only from Bay Shore, but also from River View also--were filled with mothers and young children, who quickly got irritable at the delay when they wanted to be home in bed.

Passengers on the River View trolleys alighted during the night power failure and went into Thompson's Sea Girt House, where the proprietors opened all the facilities for the comfort of the mothers and their babes in arms....

In 1939, George P. Mahoney, former racing commissioner, leased the park from the transit company, and five years later bought it.

A fire swept the midway at the resort while Mr. Mahoney operated the park, doing considerable damage just before the opening of the season. The damage however was repaired in time for the opening.²⁴

Krelleer's farewell contrasted the rowdiness of River View with the polish of Bay Shore. The transit company permitted beer at River View and it attracted the Sandy Bottom Gang, thugs who made it necessary for the conductor to collect the fares with a burly body-guard. The night-time charter parties who went to River View on rented trolleys often hurled beer bottles through the store windows of Highlandtown. Krelleer describes bottle tossing episodes between two passing trolley charter groups, a scene much like two battleships slugging it out at close quarters.

The summer of 1947 was Bay Shore's last full season, and in the autumn of that year the steel company demolished all the structures except the train shed. In the process, some 4 dollars in change turned up, as Jacques Kelly reported in a 40th anniversary story.²⁵

The handful of coins discovered during Bay Shore's demolition was probably all the Bethlehem Steel industry received for its investment in the property. Over the years, the industry faltered under foreign competition, and by the 1980s it was more a question of survival than expansion.

By the 1980s Bethlehem Steel was facing hard times and its vast land holdings were no longer needed for expansion; in fact, its very survival was at stake; the company had to be lean and mean to compete with foreign competition and high production costs. Thus, forty years after the real estate coup of 1947, the same parcels passed to the State of Maryland, and ironically enough, they were for environmental and recreational purposes. The State acquired not only the 900 acres of the 1947 buying program but another 410 acres as well.²⁶

As early as 1979, Baltimore County was given 30 acres of surplus land at the west end of the trolley car bridge over Shallow Creek. This tract, a donation by the Bethlehem Steel Company for a nominal five dollars, includes both BTC parcels and former Welsh family property.²⁷

All that remained of the old park was the trolley car waiting station, a sort of classic iron-framed open-air train shed. Some supports of the trolley car bridge across Shallow Creek could still be seen although the bridge itself was demolished by the 1933 hurricane. Mr. Morris Todd, who formerly farmed the "Todd's Inheritance" acres nearby, recalled in April 1988 that the Roberts mansion survived a long time being about 500 yards from the park; that was the home of Harry B. Wolf, Baltimore attorney famous for his part in the Norris murder case of 1922. Some of the Roberts property was platted for subdivision, although there is no recorded subdivision shown on Tax Map 112 or 115. Development got as far as the laying of cast iron pipe, installing fire hydrants and pouring curbs; the infrastructure is now overgrown by a second growth forest. Mr. Todd also recalled that at one point the park's roller coaster took the passengers out over the water.

In his 1984 study of post-war transit activity, Herbert H. Harwood quoted Edward S. Miller's statement about the scenic trip and the splendid view upon the excursionist's arrival, "Probably the single most memorable Baltimore streetcar ride was the trip 'out to sea' over the Bear Creek trestle to Sparrows

Point. Forget the mills and the murk behind - Bay Shore Park and a swim in the Chesapeake Bay was beyond through the woods at the end of the line."²⁸

Notes

- ¹ BALTIMORE COUNTY (Land Records) 1905-1905, WPC 283: 168, MSA CE 62-283.
- ² "Bay Shore To Open," *Sun*, 5 August 1906, p. 7.
- ³ *Baltimore American*, 11 August 1906, p. 16.
- ⁴ *Baltimore American*, 12 August 1906.
- ⁵ *Sun*, 11 August 1906, p. 14.
- ⁶ *Baltimore American*, 13 August 1906, p. 12.
- ⁷ *Baltimore American*, 14 August 1906, p. 13.
- ⁸ Unpublished materials, in possession of the author.
- ⁹ Estella Spencer, "I Remember Bay Shore Park's Great Days," *Sun Magazine*, 1 May 1966, p. 2.
- ¹⁰ *Sun Magazine*, 22 November 1987, p. 30.
- ¹¹ *Evening Sun*, 10 November 1920.
- ¹² Michael R. Farrell, *Who Made All Our Street Cars Go?* (np, 1973), p. 218.
- ¹³ *Reflections: Sparrows Point, Md., 1887-1975* (n.p., 1976), p. 18.
- ¹⁴ Baltimore County Tax Ledger, District 15, 1918, folio 806.
- ¹⁵ Baltimore County Tax Ledger, District 15, 1923, vol. 1-z, f. 555; vol. s-z, f. 316; vol. a-d, f. 82.
- ¹⁶ *Jeffersonian*, 30 May 1941.
- ¹⁷ BALTIMORE COUNTY (Land Records) 1944-1968, RJS 1345:450, MSA CE 62-1200.
- ¹⁸ BALTIMORE COUNTY (Land Records) 1946-1973, RJS 1447:195, MSA CE 62-1302.
- ¹⁹ *Ibid.*
- ²⁰ "New Steel Plant Extensions Seen In Land Deals," *Evening Sun*, 18 January 1947.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*
- ²² "Story of the Month, Bethlehem Moves Towards Expansion Here," *Baltimore Magazine*, August 1947, p. 8.
- ²³ Frederick J. Kreller, "Bay Shore Park Just A Memory, To Follow in the Steps of River View," *Evening Sun*, 20 August 1947.
- ²⁴ *Ibid.*
- ²⁵ Jacques Kelly, "The Park at the End of the Line," *Evening Sun*, 20 November 1987.
- ²⁶ Thomas W. Waldron, "Black Jewel of the Bay to Crown Area Parks," *Evening Sun*, 25 November 1987; BALTIMORE COUNTY (Land Records), 1987-1987, SM 7753:192, MSA CE 62-7608.
- ²⁷ Tax Map 115, Parcel P32; BALTIMORE COUNTY (Land Records), 1979-1979, EHK Jr. 6096:820, MSA CE 62-5951.
- ²⁸ Herbert H. Harwood, Jr., *Baltimore and Its Streetcars* (New York: Quadrant Press, 1984), p. 96.

Corrections

In *History Trails* 41, no. 2, author Teri Rising claimed, "the first Catholic Church in Catonsville... was named 'Saint Agnes,'" in honor of Rebecca Sommerville's daughter, Agnes. For that information, Rising cited Charles Bernard Tiernan's book, *The Tiernan Family in Maryland* (Baltimore: Gallery McCann, 1898), page 66.

A *History Trails* reader responded with the intention to clarify that the Catholic Church does not name churches after children; instead, it names them in honor of Saints - in this case Saint Agnes.

Research has yet to indicate whether naming the church after the child or Saint was a mutually exclusive affair.

Editor's Notes

An historically and socially savvy reader will note that Bay Shore Park was an unfortunate cultural product of its time in that it was a segregated entertainment venue. Non-whites were not welcome at Bay Shore Park.

However, in Baltimore County there were alternative entertainment venues in the form of African-American amusement parks, and black-only beaches. We encourage our readership, members, and students to research these cultural venues, and submit articles to *History Trails* for consideration.

It is the policy of the Historical Society of Baltimore County (HSBC) to encourage research, analysis, and interpretation of history across social, economic, and political spectrums. Recently, the Society engaged that effort through its sponsorship of a new 501(c)3 organization, The Louis S. Diggs Research Center for African American History, Inc.

Submissions

While *History Trails'* subject matter has traditionally focused almost entirely on local concerns, we are interested in expanding its scope into new areas. For example, where one article might focus on a single historic building, person, or event in the county, others may develop and defend a historic argument, compare and contrast Baltimore County topics to other locales, or tie seemingly confined local topics to larger events.

Articles abiding by the *Chicago Manual of Style* Documentary-Note (or Humanities) system will be given priority. A convenient, and abbreviated, guide to Chicago style citations may be found in Kate L. Turabian's *A Manual for Writers of Research Papers, Theses, and Dissertations* (University of Chicago Press, 2007).

Digital and hard copies of articles should be submitted to:

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